

This Contested Land: The Storied Past and Uncertain Future of America's National Monuments. By McKenzie Long. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022. 392 pages. \$24.95 cloth; \$24.95 ebook.

This Contested Land is a historical and autoethnographic study of thirteen (out of 130 total) national monuments currently established in the United States. McKenzie Long is a non-Native Sierra Nevada-based outdoor recreationist, writer, and graphic designer who implements vivid storytelling to recount personal, on-the-ground experiences for each of the thirteen monuments. If she's not alone while in the monument's area, she's with her partner, a friend, or a family member, and the relationships encourage her readers to connect more vividly with the text. She chooses to introduce each place through layered stories told to her by activists, Native and non-Native community members, and government employees. These experiences are folded in with her own and with impressively written threads of place-based historical events, such as stories of Billy the Kid and Geronimo. She focuses on the group of monuments that former president Donald Trump called in for review in 2017. The review investigated every monument established as far back as 1996 to identify areas that could be redacted to support other forms of land use. Resource extraction was a primary goal, including granting leases to mining companies. In many instances, as Long discovers throughout her research, how and why people use land has and always will be complex, contested, and layered. National monuments are palimpsestic landscapes, places layered with varying geographical, cultural, political, and ecological differences and perceived in different ways by different people at different times.

This book takes us through the complicated exchange of how we “change the land around [us]” and subsequently how “the land also changes us” (284). Her 285-page book is organized into three parts, “Rock,” “Rift,” and “Ripple,” each of which contains a small collection of personal experiences from different monuments that correspond in their own way to the theme. Long sets out to spend time recreating, researching, and/or volunteering in each of the protected areas. We follow her up climbing routes in the Southwest, trudging through deep snow in Washington, backpacking a series of summits in California, snorkeling in protected waters off the shores of the Hawaiian Islands, and white-water rafting the Rio Grande, to name a few activities. These adventures speak to popular romantic views of nature and evoke a certain level of privilege, two characteristics reminiscent of outdoor recreation. Long, too, acknowledges the complications of being involved in these activities. However, this book is about the multiplicities of land use and land relations. Her activities are the ways in which she connects with these sites, enticing the reader to reflect on how they connect to place as well, whether that be outdoor recreation or in other ways.

Formally, her use of storytelling entices the reader beyond her adventures with an unconventional writing style that shifts back and forth through time, events, and narratives. For example, she begins her discussion of the Nevada-based Basin Range National Monument with a brief paragraph explaining the renowned land artist, Michael Heizer, and the few of his sculptures found throughout the Southwest, including *City*, which stands within the monument boundaries. She shifts out of this context to place us in real time with her and her sister arriving at the monument together and observing the landscape. Then, immediately after, she takes us back in time as she recalls a memory from her time in art school. This style mimics oral tradition and the natural flux of conversation.

In addition to her nonlinear written form, another strength of the text includes the ways she differentiates between and among types of public lands, the agencies that manage these sites and areas, and which political and environmental events triggered the initial establishment of the national monuments. These stakeholders and processes are complicated, and she writes about them clearly without forgoing her provocative writing. This text could be assigned for students at the high school level or higher who may be interested in history, American Indian studies, environmentalism, politics, geography, and ethnography. Long's storytelling may appeal more to younger audiences, those outside of academia, or those within who want access to a strong example of autoethnographic writing. Furthermore, it's useful to note that at the end of the 285 pages, she utilizes the remaining 100 pages to include a copy of the Antiquities Act, a list of all the monuments established, and an excellent selection of references.

Long's text on monuments is situated within a larger body of work dedicated to understanding the environmental and sociopolitical nuances of public lands and nature more broadly. Considering the nature-culture relationship, her book could have made room to dive deeper into the history of "wilderness" as an invented concept. The construction of wilderness is directly connected to the conceptual and physical construction of parks and monuments, leaving me with an expectation to see the dots between the two connected here. I acknowledge that she focuses on the more recently established national monuments and their histories and that her intention is to shift away from dichotomies (like nature-culture). However, it's worth noting that her storytelling and immersive perspective could have been a great contribution to the conversation and could further complicate wilderness as it exists today. As a younger woman in this current generation of outdoor enthusiasts, she departs from male-dominant environmentalists by writing an original text that inspires the reader to consider what it means to have an intimate relationship with public lands. This includes your own relationship to the land as well as considering others.' She states that for more people to come together with their differences and unite to protect lands, there must be "sacrifice, compromise, and a willingness to listen and understand differing perspectives" (191).

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